

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STAFF ANALYSIS

BILL #: PCB APC 19-06 County Judges

SPONSOR(S): Appropriations Committee

TIED BILLS: **IDEN./SIM. BILLS:**

REFERENCE	ACTION	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR or BUDGET/POLICY CHIEF
Orig. Comm.: Appropriations Committee		Gusky	Pridgeon

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The Supreme Court issued Order No. SC18-1970, dated December 28, 2018, certifying the need for four additional circuit court judges, four additional county judges, and decertifying the need for three county court judges.

Article V of the Florida Constitution states the legislature may reject the recommendation or accept the recommendation in whole or in part, decreasing or increasing the number of judges by more or less than the judicial recommendation upon a two thirds finding of need by both chambers of the legislature.

PCB APC 19-06 establishes two new county court judgeships, one in Citrus County and one in Flagler County.

The estimated annual recurring cost will be \$613,274.

The PCB conforms to the FY 2019-2020 proposed House General Appropriations Act.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2019.

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Article V, Section 9 of the State Constitution states:

“Determination of number of judges.—The supreme court shall establish by rule uniform criteria for the determination of the need for additional judges except supreme court justices, the necessity for decreasing the number of judges and for increasing, decreasing or redefining appellate districts and judicial circuits. If the supreme court finds that a need exists for increasing or decreasing the number of judges or increasing, decreasing or redefining appellate districts and judicial circuits, it shall, prior to the next regular session of the legislature, certify to the legislature its findings and recommendations concerning such need. Upon receipt of such certificate, the legislature, at the next regular session, shall consider the findings and recommendations and may reject the recommendations or by law implement the recommendations in whole or in part; provided the legislature may create more judicial offices than are recommended by the supreme court or may decrease the number of judicial offices by a greater number than recommended by the court only upon a finding of two-thirds of the membership of both houses of the legislature, that such a need exists.”

To determine a need for trial court judgeships, the Office of State Courts Administrator (OSCA) relies on an analysis of weighted caseload filings per judge. In 1999, at the request of the Florida Legislature, OSCA contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to develop and validate a Delphi-based Weighted Caseload System.¹

The weighted caseload system assigns a time value to cases by their case type, based on the various kinds and complexity of the cases that are filed. The case type time value, or case weight, establishes an approximate workload value per case filing by case type, which is used to determine the number of judges required to handle these cases. The weighted caseload system is revised periodically to account for changes in procedure and case complexity. The system was updated by OSCA and NCSC in 2007 and most recently in 2016.

The Supreme Court issued Order No. SC18-1970, dated December 28, 2018, in regard to the Certification of Need for Additional Judges.² In the certification, the court recommended 4 new circuit judgeships (one each in the First and Fourteenth judicial circuits and two in the Ninth Judicial Circuit), and the decertification of 3 existing county court judgeships (one in Pasco County and two in Brevard County).

Section 11, Article V of the State Constitution requires the Governor to fill judicial office vacancies by appointment from a list of candidates nominated by a judicial nominating commission³, for a term ending on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January of the year following the next general election occurring at least one year after the date of appointment.

¹ National Center for State Courts, *Florida Judicial Workload Assessment Final Report*, Office of the State Courts Administrator (May 16, 2016), <http://www.flcourts.org/core/fileparse.php/558/urlt/Final-Florida-Judicial-Workload-Assessment-Final-report.pdf>

² *Certification of Need for Additional Judges*, SC18-1970 (Fla. SC 2018)

³ Article V, Section 20, Subsection (5) of the State Constitution states that each judicial nomination commission shall be composed of nine members. Three members must be appointed by the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar from among The Florida Bar members who are actively engaged in the practice of law with offices within the territorial jurisdiction of the affected court, district or circuit. Three electors must reside in the territorial jurisdiction of the court or circuit appointed by the governor. And three of the electors must reside in the territorial jurisdiction of the court or circuit and who are not members of the bar of Florida, selected and appointed by a majority vote of the other six members of the commission.

There have been no additional county judgeships authorized by the Legislature since 2006.⁴

Effect of the Proposed Bill

PCB APC 19-06 establishes two new county court judgeships, one each in Citrus and Flagler counties, effective July 1, 2019.

B. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1. Amends s. 34.022, F.S., establishing new county court judgeships

Section 2. Provides an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

The PCB would result in a need for \$613,274 and 4 full-time equivalent positions (two judges and two judicial assistants). Funding and positions for the PCB are included in PCB APC 19-01, the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 proposed House General Appropriations Act.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None.

2. Expenditures:

The cost of county judges and judicial assistants are paid for by the state. Under s. 29.008, F.S., counties are responsible for facilities, security, communications and information technology costs for county courts. For county courts receiving additional judges and associated staff, this bill could result in additional costs in these areas.

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

None.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

None.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None.

2. Other:

⁴ Ch 2006-166, Laws of Fla.
STORAGE NAME: pcb06.APC
DATE: 3/25/2019

None.

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None.

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None.

IV. AMENDMENTS/ COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES